

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 13988 271053Z
ACTION EA-09

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C O N F I D E N T A L BANGKOK 13988

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF, TH, US
SUBJ: REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

REF: STATE 136955

1. MINISTER OF INTERIOR SAMAK SUNTHARAWET CLARIFIED HIS POSITION ON REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT AT LUNCH WITH AMBASSADOR, MR. JOHN H. SULLIVAN, USAID ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR, BUREAU FOR ASIA AND GLADSON ON JUNE 26. SAMAK REVIEWED THE HISTORY OF THE REFUGEE PROBLEM AND SAID THE RTG WAS GUIDED BY THREE PRINCIPLES:

A) TO SEEK THE RESETTLEMENT IN THIRD COUNTRIES OF AS MANY REFUGEES AS POSSIBLE;

B) TO AVOID ATTRACTING MORE REFUGEES; AND

C) TO RESETTLE THE REFUGEES ALREADY IN THAILAND.

THE PROBLEM WAS THAT HASTY OR ILL-CONSIDERED ACTION ON RESETTLEMENT COULD THWART THRID COUNTRY ACCEPTANCE OF REFUGEES AND COULD ATTRACT MORE PEOPLE. HE ALSO STRESSED THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL PROBLEM FOR THAILAND WHICH WOULD ARISE IF ANY PROGRAMS APPEARED TO GIVE THE REFUGEES BETTER TREATMENT THAN THAI NATIONALS.

2. SAMAK SAID THAT HE WAS GOING TO PROPOSE TO THE
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CABINET THAT RESETTLEMENT AREAS BE CREATED ALONG THE LAO BORDER IN WHICH A MIXTURE OF THAI AND LAO IN A 2/3 AND 1/3 RATION WOULD BE INSTALLED. UNDER QUESTIONING HE THEN ADDED THAT THIS WOULD, OF COURSE, ONLY TAKE CARE OF A SMALL NUMBER OF REFUGEES AND THAT OTHER AREAS IN THE INTERIOR SHOULD BE SET ASIDE FOR THE EXCLUSIVE RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES.

SAMAK SAID THE PLAN WAS STILL CONFIDENTIAL BUT HE
HAD DISCUSSED IT LAST WEEK WIT HENRY KAMM OF THE
NEW YORK TIMES*

3. COMMENT: IT APPEARS TO US THAT THE IDEA OF A MIX
OF THAI AND LAO IN ONE OR MORE BORDER RESETTLEMENT
AREAS IS BEING EMPHASIZED BY SAMAK AS THIS IS A NEW
WRINKLE ON A WELL-WORN SUBJECT. THE IMPORTANT THING,
HOWEVER, IS THE RECOGNITION THAT A MAJOR RESETTLEMENT
EFFORT EXCLUSIVELY FOR REFUGEES IS IN THE WIND. AS
WE EXPLAINED TO SULLIVAN DURING HIS VISIT, WE THINK
THE RTG IS A LONG WAY FROM REACHING A FINAL DECISION
OR MAKING ANY COCRETE PLANS. FOR THIS REASON, THE
THE FACT THAT THE U.S. IS CONSIDERING ASSISTING IN
RESETTLEMENT WILL HAVE TO CONTINUE TO BE DISCREETLY
HANDLED.
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Message Attributes

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